

FR: Susan Hollins, Chair  
DA: April 7, 2017  
RE: Follow-up Information Re Kindergarten Policy and Issues

We are not meeting again until Tuesday, April 18th, 2017 (3:30 p.m., Conference Room, City Hall).

Since the kindergarten issues raised at yesterday's policy meeting connect with decisions (staffing/program) being made now for FY18, I wanted to share my post-meeting research and feedback now, hoping this is helpful to personnel planning for FY18.

1. Policy Amendment Allowing Superintendent to Not Start Child in Kindergarten

Law/Regulations and School Committee Policy

MGL c69 Section 1 and 603 CMR 8.0

8.01 *"All school districts shall provide kindergarten education for all eligible children.*

8.02 *"Class size cannot exceed 25."*

8.03 *"Kindergarten classes shall be taught by qualified and certified teachers."*

*All youth "must attend school beginning in September of the calendar year in which he or she attains the age of 6" and "Each school committee may establish its own permissible age for school attendance, provided that such age is not older than the mandatory age established by 603 CMR 8:00*

Sum: Greenfield School Committee's September kindergarten admission age policy aligns with the Massachusetts guideline for first grade admission age. State law requires kindergarten for every child, ready or not, by whatever standards of eligibility are in place (typically age).

My non-exhaustive research found no examples of public school students being prevented from starting kindergarten if age eligible, here or anywhere, but I did quickly find a law suit filed against a private preschool for excluding a non-potty-trained three-year-old.

2. Transitional Kindergarten (TK) or Readiness Kindergarten (RK)

There are numerous examples and a plethora of information about school district and state initiatives to offer Transitional Kindergarten classes –a year of readiness kindergarten prior to traditional kindergarten. If Greenfield still has 6, 7, 8, 9 kindergarten classes, could a Transitional Kindergarten be established? Mel mentioned 13-18 children needing this in 16-17. Research posted online was very positive about the benefits of the additional year.

Requiring a child age-eligible for kindergarten to go to preschool seems fraught with problems and challenges. Melodie mentioned 13 -18 students just in her one elementary school, enough for a TK Gift of Time classroom perhaps.

The internet has multiple articles and research about the positive benefit of offering a 2-year kindergarten program for certain children. The research indicates future higher literacy levels, higher executive functions, better memory for rules, better ability to control behavior and impulses. The school committee could create a policy authorizing

the superintendent to configure kindergarten with a Transitional Kindergarten class. Would that be helpful?

[When a 2-year kindergarten (called: The Gift of Time) became an option in one district I knew, nearly 1/3 of the parents asked for this program. In the second year the additional cost was one kindergarten classroom. Special education in future years decreased.]

3. Air Exchange in Bathrooms

Melodie mentioned classrooms smelling from bathroom use. The subcommittee could consider a facility policy requiring air exchange units in bathrooms checked for capacity related to bathroom use. Upgrading venting could also be accomplished without a policy but it could be a facility governance policy.

4. Improved Readiness Testing and Monitoring

There was discussion on this topic. A quick search found that DESE has just developed the MKEA (Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment) and it looks like the Northampton Collaborative (CES) has the contract for training and working with interested districts. Contact online is: [jmyers@collaborative.org](mailto:jmyers@collaborative.org) ?? [not a recommendation; I am just passing on info I found] Greenfield School Committee does have policies on student assessment that could be reviewed to amend if needed.

5. Toilet Training, State Guidelines

The only guidelines I found from DESE had to do with “program safety standards” for private or residential schools. “*Each program shall instruct students in good grooming habits, provide opportunities to brush teeth after meals, and conduct toilet training programs for all students who are not toilet trained, unless otherwise indicated in an IEP.*”

6. Designating Toilet-Trained Kindergarten Classrooms

A possible policy could be designating certain kindergarten classrooms “toilet-trained classrooms” but this would likely require busing children from one elementary school to another which may not be desired and there could be unforeseen problems with this. I found examples of school districts that made this designation.